



To: Company Commanders

From: Company Commanders

Consequence Management at the Company Level In Iraq and Afghanistan

“I got a call late in the afternoon, about 20 minutes before the above-ground unit was hitting a target in a village we had been working hard to get on board with the Coalition. We spun up our QRF. Our desire in situations like this is to be first on the scene. En route, I got the report that there were two enemy KIA and the unit was exfilling after dropping a thermite grenade in a car that the target had used to traffic weapons. Here is what we saw when we rolled in: A car was burning and next to the car was a dead body—burned black (he had fallen dead near the burning vehicle and subsequently

caught fire himself). Another military-age male was lying dead with a bullet in his chest. No weapons visible. A woman in her sixties, the mother of these two guys, was screaming and pounding herself in the face. Her face was bleeding and swollen, and chunks of hair were missing from her head. The villagers were gathering and getting increasingly emotionally charged. To make matters worse, the two dead guys were nephews of the local Sons of Iraq leader. The sun was starting to set.”

What are your considerations? What would you do?

The Rest of the Story

Gary McCormick

C/1-14 IN

Consequence management is taking the time and the effort, post-event, to ensure that the populace is not swayed to a negative atmosphere based on an event. You’ve got to be proactive; you’ve got to be the first there.

The Sons of Iraq in this area were already on the verge of quitting. That initial patrol calmed people down and let them know that it wasn’t us, but that we’d find out what happened. It was starting to get dark and the mob was starting to get ... not violent, but we were getting outnumbered. I was like, “Hey, you know what, let’s let this calm down.” We did our initial consequence management with the Sons of Iraq leader and told him we’d come back the next day.

The next day was what I’d call an “IO ambush.” I returned there thinking I was going back to the site to take some more pictures in the daylight, gather some more information and facts. The entire village was waiting and had all of the senior leaders at the main sheik’s house. I get pulled over by my Sons of Iraq leader. He brought me into the main sheik’s house. There were 20 old guys there all lined up. Picture 20 chairs on this side of the garden and then one on the other side. As you are walking in, you open the gate and you see that and you’re thinking, “Oh, crap, this is not going to be good.” But you have to put on that flak jacket and take all the hits. Be professional about it—and

calm and mature—because you’ve got a lot of angry people throwing insults and throwing comments out there that you know aren’t true, and you can’t overreact.

I took this approach: “We’re going to overcome this. We are going to still work together. We can get through this. We’ve had a great relationship, and we are going to continue that. We are going to figure out what the situation was and how we can prevent it from happening again.” By the end of the meeting, we had some warm handshakes. There was a slow rebuilding of the relationship.

In the end everything turned out OK, but I truly believe that it did because of our consequence management. If we had not gone there that night and again the next day, I think things would have simmered and boiled over. At the very least, the Sons of Iraq in the village would have walked off.

A Former Company Commander

I think one thing working in Gary’s favor is that the two guys who were killed were actively involved in the insurgency. The unit that killed them had done the right thing: The two guys were in fact the target, and, as shown in the subsequent investigation, deadly force on the objective was required.

I think the key point is that even if it is a “good” target, the end result can easily be counterproductive to our cause if leaders on the ground, like Gary, don’t immediately get in-

"You've got to be proactive," says CPT Gary McCormick, C/1-14 IN, with Iraqi security forces after a successful raid to capture an al Qaeda-in-Iraq cell leader.



involved. Chris Loftis [see below] talks about getting a "target handover" to help facilitate this, which, I believe, is the ideal.

Chris Loftis
A/1-14 IN

The above-ground units that come in have their own targeting methodology, and they have a different understanding of our battlefield. Establish a relationship with them. Have the phone numbers of the guys that come and do this so that you can call as soon as you get wind that a mission is coming your way. Share everything you can as far as disposition of Sons of Iraq checkpoints and IP/IA, including BLUEFOR. In my battalion and my brigade, it is mandated that you do a target handover when an above-ground unit shows up. If they

come in here, the full expectation is that I go find them on the ground and make sure that they hand the target to me.

Lately, the units have been very good at it. They call us in advance and let us know they are coming and ask us for atmospheric. I'll give them blue and red disposition and any operations that took place in that area, and I'll try to talk them onto their objective. When they conduct link-up, they are really good at handing us the objective. This allows me to meet my standards on consequence management. They might come in and SSE a house and leave things in disarray. Even if they grab a bad guy, I think it is important to at least try to put the furniture back in place and clean up a little bit, and if anything's been broken, make sure that the proper restitution is done. One thing I ask from the unit that conducted the mis-

sion is to let me take a picture and get a name of everyone they are going to pull off the objective. At my morning security meeting, at the joint coordination center we have in town, I can address what happened and ask, "Does anybody know this guy? Who is he?" This allows me to keep the community better informed (we tell them what the mission was about as best we can without violating any classifications), and it creates the opportunity for people to give us additional background information about anyone who might have been detained. Pictures are critical in this process.

Travis Shain
C/2-14 CAV

Over a series of raids, based on our lessons learned, we developed a technique in which we bring a local leader onto the objective once we are complete—someone we have a good



CPT Chris Loftis, A/1-14 IN, receives a report in his tactical operations center. Good communication with above-ground units is crucial in consequence management.

relationship with and whom the local people respect.

We go to his house and pick him up right before our site exploitation is complete. We bring him in and have him talk to all the families. He's not part of the operation, but after the objective is complete, he can ensure that family members don't beat themselves or make up stories to pass along to the local community about how Coalition forces came in and stole their money and ripped up their houses. It prevents accusations later.

Recently, after a raid, we had a sheik meeting and one of the men stood up and alleged that he had been dragged out of his house in his underwear and that we had torn up his house, beat down his door and his furniture, etc. We *had* been there, and none of that had happened. Our local Sons of Iraq leader had been on the objective and could vouch for us. To save face, they made up a story, but the bottom line was that it wasn't even an issue because a local Iraqi leader was on the objective.

Rob Newbill

B/1-14 IN

Consequence management is moving to a problem site and addressing the problem quickly. Maybe not solving it quickly, but at least identifying what the problems are and formulating an initial plan of action to solve them. The point is to get on the ground quickly, identify what the problem is, and provide some initial information-ops message that explains it or assures the people on the ground that you are going to work to fix it.

In September, there was a patrol conducting a boat infil on a river that was our eastern boundary. We did not know about the boat infil. We knew that the Iraqi army, Sons of Iraq and Iraqi police were occupying some checkpoints to overwatch the river because we had given them information that enemy elements were using river crossings to move between provinces. So they were overwatching the

river, and they saw something on the river. The naval patrol used a laser of some type to lase the checkpoint, upon which the Iraqis got excited—and maybe nervous—and fired some warning shots. Gunfire escalated until eventually there was some close air support called in to isolate or suppress the fire coming from the Iraqi security forces at the checkpoint.

It was about as bad as you can get as far as a green-on-blue problem. There were six dead at the site: two IPs, two Iraqi army soldiers, and one Sol. There were no U.S. forces wounded.

We have an Iraqi army TOC here at our JSS. This happened about 1:30 in the morning. They were getting pretty excited, so I walked across and asked them what was going on. Once I got a feel for what the problem was, I knew we had to get there quickly, so I stood up my TAC. I arrived at the area and met with some key leaders. I learned that they had a couple of seriously wounded men they were trying to treat. We were able to move quickly, sustain those guys and conduct a medevac to get them out.

Although it was a terrible situation, at least the people knew that our unit came to help.

In the weeks that followed, we continued to work on this. Part of Iraqi culture is that if you take a life, you make a payment to the family to help them out. One thing that we try to do is to make each of those payments a special event, almost like a memorial where you express to the family your condolences and make sure they understand that it means something to you that their loved one was a member of the ISF and gave his life in support of his country.

Scott Horrigan

A/2-87 IN & HHC/1-32 IN

I look at consequence management as a unit's efforts to recover from or diminish the potential negative IO impacts of your actions. It allows you to get the truth out before the



CPT Travis Shain, C/2-14 CAV, with Iraqi sheiks and a Sons of Iraq leader. After an objective is complete, he relies on respected local leaders to vouch for the actions of Coalition forces.

Company Command Glossary

Above-Ground Unit—An outside unit that briefly enters an area for a specific purpose, as opposed to a ‘ground-owning’ unit that works daily in that particular geographic area.

BLUEFOR—Blue forces (in this case, U.S. forces). NOTE: Blue = U.S., Red = Enemy, Green = Iraqi security forces.

Exfil—Departure from the objective area.

FOB—Forward operating base.

IA—Iraqi army.

Infil—Infiltration (to the objective).

IO—Information operations.

IP—Iraqi police.

ISF—Iraqi security forces.

JSS—Joint security station; similar to combat outpost or forward operating base but collocated with Iraqi security forces of some type.

KIA—Killed in action.

QRF—Quick reaction force.

Shura—Group consultation convened for decision making.

Sol—Sons of Iraq (local militia who, at the time of this article, were providing local security in partnership with Coalition forces). Part of the “awakening” or *Sahwa* movement.

SSE—Sensitive site exploitation.

TAC—Mobile command post.

TOC—Tactical operations center.

facts can be manipulated by the enemy into false information. Just like any battle drill, consequence management can be done hastily or with deliberate thought; obviously, the latter is ideal.

In order to conduct deliberate consequence management, you have to plan how to deal with mistakes, such as damaging property, injuring or killing an innocent civilian, or detaining innocent personnel—all of which can be used by the enemy as examples to the population that U.S. and Coalition forces are not the answer to their problems. A technique I’ve seen work is to designate a reserve force with a priority of planning to act as a consequence management team. This force is task-organized with assets such as PAO/media, medical services, civil affairs, counter-IED teams, engineers, interpreters and—most importantly—some type of host-nation force and government representation. A properly task-organized element that continues to ask the “what if” question has the ability to engage with the local population immediately and accurately before the incident degrades any possible success the mission could have had.



A 2/25 Stryker Brigade Combat Team soldier greets Iraqi children. Engaging with the local population and treating the people respectfully helps win their trust and cooperation.

An example of a hasty consequence management action was in Afghanistan when a company-size FOB was attacked in the middle of the night. Insurgent fighters launched their attack from within civilian homes that were in close proximity to the FOB. At the conclusion of the clearance through the village, 12 insurgent fighters were killed and two wounded insurgents were captured. Several U.S. soldiers were wounded, and there was a significant amount of damage done to civilian property during the attack, but there were no civilian injuries. Over the next six hours, the company and battalion headquarters immediately put together a plan, first to capitalize on what was a clear victory for U.S. and Afghan forces and second, to deny the enemy the opportunity to change the facts.

Several steps were taken. First, we informed the provincial governor and coordinated for him to visit the FOB that same day. Considering that he had only been to this part of the border once over the last year, this in itself was a huge statement. Second, the Afghan press was invited and was escorted by the governor to the FOB. Third, the company arranged for a large-scale “mega *shura*” to be conducted between the tribal elders and the governor. During this *shura*, the tribal elders were shown proof that the insurgent attack failed, that there was no loss of civilian life and that arrangements were made to have damaged property repaired. By the end of the *shura*, the tribal elders and the governor praised both Afghan and U.S. forces for their restraint and their effectiveness. The *shura* provided a very tribal Pashtun region an opportunity to connect with and gain confidence in the provincial governance. The Afghan press corps turned a local victory into one that was seen on Afghan TV and heard over the radio throughout the country.

Lucas Yoho

A/1-27 IN

One of my platoons killed a local-national girl—they ran her over. It was a complete accident. My soldiers were doing all the right things. What happened was the father was on one side of the street and the girl was on the other side, and he called her across the street. She ran out between the cars, tripped and got run over. None of our guys saw



After taking command of A/1-27 IN, CPT Lucas Yoho, who believes being first with the truth is key to successful consequence management, greets an Iraqi leader.

her at all. Four years old ... It was a tragic situation. She died instantly, massive head trauma. The platoon did a great job of consequence management in the aftermath.

We engaged with the Iraqi police and with the family. We opened an investigation with the Iraqi judge; obviously, we did everything on the Coalition force side. Regarding information operations, I immediately called the Nahia Council and, within the hour, called the judge, the Iraqi police, the national police and anyone else I could think of at the time to explain what had happened. We called the Qada chairman to say, "Here is what happened," so there wouldn't be any false stories or rumors. In Iraqi society, *bam*, you'll have an instant story otherwise.

We were first with the truth, and we were very open about it. The girl's family was very appreciative. They told me they appreciated our being so open and honest. We compensated the family, of course. We later played a loudspeaker announcement around the city to explain the incident, to apologize and to ask people to stay away from vehicles.

Being first with the truth is absolutely key; it pays huge dividends. The enemy will use things like this against you in a heartbeat. We acted fast, so they had nothing. Although you may not plan for a specific incident like this, you can plan for a bad event to happen and have almost a battle drill as far as who you are going to call when there is trouble. Obviously you call your boss, but you also call the people you work with, your partners. You think quickly and ask yourself, "What can I do to affect this situation and come out on the positive side as much as possible?" That's just what we do from day to day.

Chris Loftis
A/1-14 IN

Anytime we hit a target, it's all about dignity and respect. Initially, obviously, you have to take care of security. For example, if you are conducting a raid and there is a suicide-vest threat, then obviously there are a lot of things you have

to do to protect the force. And some of those things aren't exactly civilian friendly. So to keep everyone secure and to control an objective, it can get a little aggressive.

However, if there's a bad guy that you detain, you are still going to treat the kids and the women with dignity and respect, and you're going to make sure that they are going to be OK. Just having good manners goes a long way here. If you pull a bunch of people out of a house in the middle of the night,

make sure they have their shoes on before you throw them out in a street that's full of sewage. If you have a bunch of old folks, go find some chairs and sit them down. Little simple things like that have larger second- and third-order effects on the way people talk to you, the information they'll bring you and on the trust you can establish.

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Art by Jody Harmon

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